A Manea Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Many of these stories were featured in my ‘Looking Back’ column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections ‘From our Old Files’ published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

The complete ‘Cambridgeshire Scrapbooks’ of which this is a small section is published online at bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

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Looking Back: Manea, to December 2015

1905 07 20
The population of Welches Dam was decreasing and the houses falling into ruins, except the public houses. They were originally erected by the Middle Level for their workmen and were not being kept up at all well. There was a chapel but it had no sanitary convenience. The building of a school was entirely out of the question. A conveyance should be provided to take the 33 children of school age from there and Purl's Bridge to Manea school. But they already had more children than they could accommodate. 05 07 20b

1912 10 04
Samuel Crouch of Manea, respected agriculturalist. Methodist and councillor – dies in river 12 10 04g

1913 04 18
Percival Spenser was the first balloonist to take an active part in military aeronautics when his balloon was attached to an armoured-plated train drawn through dense tropical forests then released to rise so he could give the position of the enemy's forces. He made balloon ascents at the last two Mammoth Shows which will be long remembered. On the first occasion the balloon was carried to Exning and on the second Mr Spencer and Miss Spencer made a double parachute ascent and later ascended again, coming down near Manea Station. 13 04 18 p8

1914 01 09
Death of Mr. John Woolhouse. —The death occurred on Wednesday week at The Lodge. Clayhithe, of Mr. John Woolhouse. Deceased, whose age was 66, was well-known in Cambridge and district. He was born at Wellingmore, near Lincoln, where his father was a large landowner, and came into the district about 29 years ago, and occupied Honey Hill Farm, Manea. For many years prior to going to March, where he resided from 1890 to 1906. Mr. Woolhouse was known throughout the county as a seed merchant and acted as representative for a Sleaford firm. He was the first secretary of the March and District Foal Show Society, an office he held for three years prior to his leaving the town and removing to Clayhithe. He was very popular among the agricultural community

1918 08 21.
Engine Causes Fire. — By the passing of one engine on the Great Eastern Railway at Manea, three fields of corn, one of which was in stook, were set on fire and destroyed.

1921 06 01

1923 06 07
Favoured with ideal weather the annual sports meeting arranged by the Pymoor and Oxlode Committee attracted a large attendance. This event, which has the reputation of being one of the best in the district, was more than up to the standard of previous years, and some keen competition was provided for an enthusiastic crowd. This year the interest of the meeting was enhanced by the production of a Challenge cup for cycle racing, and A.F. Hawes, the well known Manea cyclist, was successful in securing the honour of being the first holder of the trophy. The Manea Silver Band rendered selections throughout the day and the proceedings were further enlightened by entertainments by the Magpie Concert Party from Cambridge

1924 08 22
Much interest centred in the band concert and sports meeting held on the Vinery Road Recreation Ground, Romsey Town, Cambridge. The band contest attracted five entries –

March Railway Silver Prize Band, Manea Silver Prize Band, Royston Town S.P.B., Soham Comrades' S.P.B. and Letchworth Town S.P.B. There were two contests, a march selection, won by Royston, and a test piece when only four points separated the last three bands, the winners being Soham.

1925 05 21
The Isle of Ely football committee secretary reported that Manea had written to the Sutton football club, endeavouring to make a fixture for their last match and eventually Sutton made a date, but later wrote to say they were unable to raise a team. The club was a particularly difficult one to deal with. They were the most unbusinesslike club in the Isle.

1931 03 06
The Ouse and Cam Fishery Board want permits issued to people who catch eels as a livelihood, or to destroy them. John Barnes of Manea said men had fished for eels for centuries, it was part of their rights. He used the same implements as his great-grandfather before him; they were worth £50 and of no use for other purposes. Some years he caught £10 worth of eels, other years £80. The best time was when the flood water had almost receded that that was during the close season. He had a strong objection to getting a permit for something he'd done for years. It was the thin end of the wedge. 31 03 06b

1932 01 22
A man employed as horsekeeper by H.C. Crouch, the well-known Manea farmer said his wages were 36s. a week with house, garden & a piece of potato land. They were harvest carting on a Saturday afternoon when the foreman told them they were to work till five o'clock. But they had no dinner with them and the gang stopped at 4.15. He attended to the horses and did not get home till 6.30 but had been dismissed for disobeying orders. The judge said the farmer was perfectly in order to sack him. 32 01 22a

1935 02 30
Those who worked or lived at the First Eastern General Hospital huts in Burrell's Walk immediately after the war will be sorry to learn that many of the huts that were transferred from there to Manea for use as hen houses have been destroyed by fire. A big enterprise had been built up at Fodder Fen by Mrs Harry Crouch, who was a pioneer of the intensive system of poultry keeping. The long rows of sheds have been a familiar sight to those travelling by train but now about a quarter of a mile of them have been burnt. 35 03 30a

1937 01 01
A disastrous blaze broke out in a boiler house in the pig yard at Colony Farm, Manea. Despite the efforts of the Brigade the flames had a good hold and spread quickly to adjacent buildings in which 150 pigs were housed. Forty of the animals were liberated but the rest perished in the intense heat. The buildings, as well as a straw stack, were razed to the ground. Occupants of the George Hotel Chatteris were also awakened by the sound of the fire alarm when a blaze broke out in the kitchen. Its timely discovery allowed staff to quell the flames and prevent serious damage 37 01 01

1937 01 22
'One with a memory' writes: "My father put Tudor's circus up twice in Cambridge and once in Ipswich and eventually at the Romsey Town Cement Works, where the main part still stands and is used by Messrs Macintosh for their ever-increasing agricultural department". He has a bill, dated June 1895 which includes six shillings and fivepence for 38 pints of beer from the 'Duke of Cambridge' for the workers. Another reader recalls Samuel Murfitt from Manea, the largest man in the world, who died 50 years ago. His girth was 100 inches and as no hearse could be found large enough he had to be conveyed on a flat. The sashes had to be taken from the windows and nearly 20 men were employed to get the body out. 37 01 22e

1937 09 16
The Isle of Ely County Council considered the construction of a new road eliminating the bends between Chatteris and Warboys Road, together with the widening of the south side of the Haddenham-Earith Road to include the filling-in of the parish pond. But tenders for £440 to improve the conveniences at Manea school seemed a gross extravagance when there were only 200 children on the books. At Manea they could build a bungalow for that price. Some classes were having to be held on the stairs at March High School as there was no room left in the cloakroom, extensions should be started as soon as possible 37 09 16a

1937 10 01
The Great Ouse Catchment Board considered anti-flood schemes costing over £300,000. Work was in progress on the Old West bank between Aldreth Causeway and Willingham flat bridge, and on Soham, Swaffham & Lakenheath Lodes where weaknesses were found during the spring floods. Draglines have been hired from several contractors as have several miles of railway track and over a hundred tipping wagons. At Manea they have opened up another clay pit and started re-facing the bank but have had to cross over several watercourses and make several substantial bridges. 37 10 01a & b 37 12 28b

1937 12 29
Manea – house at Clay Pits belonging Fenn gutted by fire – 37 12 29a

1939 01 30
Flood precautions at Manea – pics – 39 01 30

1939 02 04
The new Cromwell School at Chatteris will accommodate 640 senior pupils from an area including Benwick, Manea & Witcham and be a recreational centre for young people and adults. It is one of the most modern schools with a separate department for boys and girls each with a hall equipped with a complete range of Swedish gymnastic apparatus. There are 'practical rooms' where boys will be taught handicrafts and girls housecraft and a clinic for medical inspection and dental treatment 39 02 04

1942 01 21
Allegation that Isle police constable had been slandered by a Special Constable sergeant at Manea over adultery at Purls Bridge – 42 01 21

1948 12 20
A further step towards the prevention of flooding in the fen area has been taken in the building of the Welches Dam pumping station which was officially opened and put into action. It had been decided that the reconstruction of the Low bank would be too expensive and there would be a continuous sinking of the peat fenlands behind. Comparative costs showed that a pumping station would be cheaper that building up the bank and be the most economical solution.

1951 03 29
After a lull of about a month another outbreak of fowl pest has occurred at Meldreth, where some 200 birds have had to be destroyed. The outbreak, the first reported since that at Rampton, brings the total number to 38. Some 22,000 birds have been destroyed. Last week the total of birds slaughtered in the Isle of Ely was more than doubled by an outbreak in a big flock at Manea.

1955 05 13

Work on raising the Middle Level Barrier Bank from Seven Holes Sluice Earith to Welches Dam has been in progress for three years but cannot be completed at the original price owing to increased wage rates. Serious erosion on the face of the bank between Sutton Gault and the Gull occurred during the floods last November; this section is liable to damage by erosion because of the low level of the foreland which should be made up. 55 05 13d

1958 05 22
Since May 15th ten outbreaks of fowl pest have been confirmed within a radius of eight miles of Ely in the parishes of Little Thetford, Wilburton, Coveney, Witchford and Manea. An order under the Fowl Pest Restrictions now comes into force and poultry may not be moved except under licence. The holding of poultry store markets is also prohibited. 58 05 22b

1964 06 22
Automatic half-barrier railway level crossings to be installed Wisbech Road Manea and Bottisham Rd Waterbeach – 64 06 22

1964 07 07
First automatic railway crossing gates being tested at Manea – 64 07 07

1978 03 14
Down on the pig farm something stirred, for it was the day of the VIP visit by the Leader of the Conservative Party, Mrs Margaret Thatcher. First came the locals, anxious to get a glimpse of the woman dubbed the Iron Maiden. Next came the convoy of Pressmen, then the motorcade of organisers and officials. All eyes stretched skywards for a glimpse of the helicopter which ferried her from a tub-thumping speech at Wisbech to the Sears Brothers pig unit at Manea, one of the largest and most modern in the area. She was soon talking shop with the stockman, Mr Grenville Emmerson. Mrs Thatcher described it as the most efficient pig farm she had seen and with a classic smile and wave she was off to Peterborough, leaving the pigs to wonder what all the fuss had been about.

1980 08 06
A Manea farmer has come up with a novel kind of horse-drawn vehicle which he is convinced it will double the speed of his five-year-old pony. It comprises a narrow vehicle set in motion by means of a walking platform connected to a gearing system that turns the wheels. But there is still a long way to go before the first horsecycle driver is booked for speeding.80 08 06

1985 08 31
Manea has finally put itself on the map. After years of obscurity the rambling little village in the heart of the fens has beaten more than 200 others to win the Best Kept Village award. Judges described it as ‘exquisite’, ‘a gem’ and ‘a real eye catcher’. Locals have been beavering away for months and have been helped by a poor summer. All the rain has meant that their grass stayed green. Head teacher David Wilson described Manea as ‘a tight-knit place where people take interest and pride in their village’ and butcher Jim Bent says it was community spirit that won the award. 85 08 31

1986 02 21
Manea farmer Philip Barnes has spent almost a decade perfecting a cycle for his farm horses to ride. His unique ‘Horsical’ which relies entirely on good old-fashioned giddy-up power, really works. Jester the cart horse plods along on a moving platform connected to a gearing system which turns the hefty wheels of the vehicle and enables it to go for longer journeys at higher speeds. But no-one in the village seems particularly bothered by it 86 02 18